

Exploring Social Class Segmentation in Islamic Boarding Schools (IBS): A Neoliberal Perspective from West Sumatra

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Abstract: This study explores the transformation of Islamic Boarding Schools (IBS) in West Sumatra, Indonesia, under neoliberal influences. Historically focused on religious education and character building, IBS have evolved to integrate broader academic competencies, including technological literacy, foreign language proficiency, and industry-relevant skills, in response to globalization. This research employs a qualitative methodology, combining interviews, document analysis, and observation to examine the segmentation of IBS based on social class dynamics. The findings reveal that IBS increasingly adopt market-driven practices, resulting in stratified access influenced by demographic, psychographic, and psychological factors. To address disparities, IBS implement measures such as scholarships, community funding, and waqf programs, enabling greater inclusivity for lower-income families. This study highlights the intersection of education, market forces, and social equity, showcasing how IBS balance traditional Islamic principles with contemporary educational demands in a neoliberal context.

1 INTRODUCTION

This study explores the phenomenon of social class segmentation within Islamic Boarding Schools (IBS) in West Sumatra, Indonesia, examining the intricate ways neoliberal policies and market forces influence educational practices and accessibility. Community-based education has long served as a cornerstone of the Indonesian educational system, specifically catering to the unique needs of the predominantly Muslim population. Historically, the educational framework of Islamic education in Indonesia was rooted in traditional pesantren, which served as community-based institutions addressing the specific needs of the Muslim community (Harjanto et al., 2018). These pesantren formed the foundation of the educational system, providing both religious and general education. Over time, pesantren evolved, integrating new educational concepts and structures. Today, they have transformed into contemporary madrasah, also known as Islamic boarding schools (IBS), reflecting a shift towards more formalized and structured educational models (Pasi et al., 2020). Nowadays, these institutions have become increasingly popular as alternatives that not only

focus on academic achievement but also prioritize the cultivation of Islamic character among students, reflecting the dual objectives of cognitive development and moral instruction (Harjanto et al., 2018).

In West Sumatra, where approximately 97.42% of the population identifies as Muslim, the prevailing cultural values and social norms significantly shape the community's approach to education. The emphasis on character development, alongside academic success, underscores a collective desire to foster individuals who are not only knowledgeable but also ethically grounded. However, the landscape of education in this region has experienced transformative shifts due to external pressures and changing familial structures. Many parents, grappling with the demands of modern life and career obligations, increasingly favor IBS for their children, perceiving these institutions as providing an ideal environment for both academic oversight and character education. This growing preference is not solely an individual choice; it is also influenced by broader political dynamics and the advocacy of key figures who promote enhanced educational opportunities (Suyatno, 2015).

Amidst these changes, the rise of IBS reflects broader neoliberal trends that position educational institutions as market-driven entities. The increasing demand for inclusive and quality education compels these schools to adopt competitive strategies, enhancing their facilities and diversifying extracurricular offerings to attract students. However, this shift toward a market-oriented approach often results in higher tuition fees, creating a significant barrier to access for lower-income families. The commercialization of education, facilitated by supportive government policies, enables IBS to operate with a level of autonomy that prioritizes financial viability over equitable access (Salim et al., 2023). Consequently, this transformation has led to an educational landscape where opportunities are increasingly stratified, with quality education becoming a privilege for certain social groups rather than a universal right.

From a neoliberal perspective, education is increasingly viewed as a commodity, with the implications of this commodification reverberating throughout the system. This view promotes the idea that educational services can be bought and sold, thereby encouraging institutions to operate competitively within an economically driven market (Marginson, 2016). Such a paradigm shift complicates the quest for equitable access to education and deepens existing social class divides, as access to IBS often correlates with socio-economic status. As a result, these institutions become arenas of social reproduction, where affluent families can secure better educational opportunities for their children, further entrenching social class disparities.

While much of the existing literature on Islamic education has focused on normative and pedagogical approaches, this study aims to shift the discourse towards the sociological dimensions that impact educational trends. By examining behavioral patterns, social class dynamics, and the influence of market forces, this research seeks to uncover how these elements interplay to shape the segmentation of boarding schools. Utilizing case studies from Padang and Padang Panjang, the analysis will highlight the ways in which neoliberal influences permeate the practices of IBS, ultimately affecting the accessibility and quality of Islamic education. This inquiry is significant as it not only provides theoretical insights into the effects of neoliberalism on Islamic education but also offers practical analyses that illuminate the multifaceted interactions between social class, educational policy, and community values. By mapping the contours of social class segmentation within IBS, this study aims to contribute to a more

nuanced understanding of the contemporary educational landscape in Indonesia and its implications for social equity and justice.

2 RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research methodology, utilizing techniques such as observation, interviews, and document analysis, as selected by the researcher. This methodological approach facilitates a comparative analysis across various informants involved in the implementation of boarding schools, while also examining the reciprocal relationships among the factors at play. Additionally, the use of qualitative methods, including interviews and document analysis, is deemed more suitable for addressing the research questions, as it enables a comprehensive description of the findings through narrative forms, rather than through numerical data (Flick, 2009).

2.1 Sample Size and Data Collection Techniques

The research focuses on government institutions and schools involved in the implementation of boarding schools, with a purposive sampling strategy employed to select the participants. A total of **20 participants** were selected, including school administrators, teachers, government officials, and community leaders, based on their direct involvement in the planning, execution, and oversight of Islamic boarding schools (IBS). These individuals were identified as key informants who could offer in-depth insights into the processes and challenges associated with the program. The sample size is considered sufficient for qualitative research, allowing for a rich understanding of the context, yet also manageable for detailed analysis.

2.2 Interview Process and Semi-Structured Format

Given that this study focuses on government institutions and schools, the individuals selected for the interviews were chosen using purposive sampling, driven by the rationale that they serve as representatives of their respective institutions and schools. Additionally, the interview process utilized a semi-structured format, which included a set of specific questions or topics to be explored, often referred to as an interview guide (Patton, 2022) Semi-

structured interviews are particularly effective as they allow for a guided yet flexible conversation, wherein the researcher adheres to a structured set of prompts while also leaving room for the interviewees to elaborate on relevant subjects. This approach ensures a deeper exploration of the topics while maintaining a level of consistency across interviews. Furthermore, the semi-structured format provides the researcher with the flexibility to pose open-ended questions about specific issues of interest, which may arise during the interview (Saunders, 2004).

2.3 Document Analysis

To complement the data collected through interviews, document analysis was also employed. This method involved the collection and review of official documents, including national policies, regional regulations, municipal decrees (Perwako), school curricula, and internal reports from the institutions under study. A total of **15 documents** were analyzed, providing context and supporting evidence to triangulate the interview findings. Document analysis is essential for corroborating interview data and offering a broader institutional perspective, particularly on policy-level decisions that affect the schools' operations and financial models.

2.4 Research Stages and Process

The research process is divided into four main stages: a) initial investigation, b) design, c) construction, and d) evaluation and revision. The first stage, initial investigation, involves observation, followed by a field survey and discussions with the research team. The second stage, design, includes the development of the interview format, the preparation of the interview list, and the design of the questions to be posed to the informants. The third stage, construction, involves the data collection process, after which the data is classified according to the research needs and subsequently processed. The final stage, evaluation and revision, involves the verification of the data and testing its validity through triangulation. The results obtained are then evaluated and revised in accordance with the research objectives.

This mixed-method approach, incorporating detailed participant demographics, a clear sampling strategy, and rigorous data collection techniques, enhances the study's transparency and replicability. It also ensures that the research findings are robust, well-supported, and reflective of the complex dynamics that shape the implementation and outcomes of Islamic boarding schools.

3 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Neoliberal Context Dalam Islamic Boarding Schools (IBS)

Islamic Boarding Schools (IBS), as a local Islamic educational institution in Indonesia, has historically been a cornerstone for the development of education with an Islamic approach (J. Jamaluddin, 2015). The evolution of Islamic education today necessitates that IBS continuously adapt to remain relevant in contemporary society. In recent years, IBS has integrated with the concept of modern madrasahs, now commonly referred to as Islamic Boarding Schools (IBS). This shift reflects the efforts of IBS to better align with market demands, offering greater flexibility to meet parental expectations, and thereby positioning themselves to compete within the educational sector, rather than solely adhering to the traditional educational ideologies that once defined them. According to Kusnadi, IBS were once characterized by an educational approach that placed significant emphasis on religious values, which made them resistant to change and less responsive to contemporary developments, often described as "outdated." However, over time, IBS has undergone a process of transformation, adapting to societal changes and incorporating responsive learning practices that align with modern educational trends (Kusnadi et al., 2017).

The advancement of Islamic Boarding Schools (IBS) is closely linked to the school autonomy policies introduced by the government. With the privatization of education, IBS, as educational institutions, are increasingly competing to maintain their existence and attract parental interest. The concept of privatization grants IBS the autonomy to align with the needs and demands of the market. When schools are treated as commodities subject to market forces, elements of neoliberalism begin to permeate the educational system. According to Harvey, neoliberalism is an economic-political theory that posits that societal welfare can be achieved by providing individuals with entrepreneurial freedom within an institutional framework characterized by autonomy and a free market—an approach that, in this context, applies to IBS (Salim et al., 2023). When neoliberal principles are applied to education, this results in the privatization of education, a shift in government authority, and the emergence of a generation influenced by neoliberal values. In the educational sphere, numerous aspects can be examined within a neoliberal framework, each shaped by geographical conditions, cultural roles, and

political policies. In simple terms, neoliberalism is an ideology that emphasizes individualism and free markets, which have significantly impacted educational systems in the era of globalization (Kusnadi et al., 2017).

Aravena and Quiroga characterize neoliberalism as a flexible, multidimensional, and dynamic concept (Aravena & Quiroga, 2016). This concept can be applied to various fields, including education. The key terms for understanding neoliberalism are "freedom" and "markets" (Aravena & Quiroga, 2016) which are central components, albeit simplistic and reductionist in their portrayal of neoliberalism. In the context of education, multiple aspects can be analyzed, each influenced by geography, culture, and the political context in which it is implemented (Hall & Pulsford, 2019). However, the focus of this study is the reconstruction of neoliberal thought within the framework of market principles and autonomy; the right of parents to choose "the best school for their children"; and the role of market forces in a majority Muslim society. The research was conducted across three provinces in Indonesia. The findings indicate that each IBS has a segmented market, primarily consisting of the middle-class Muslim community. This segmentation is based on the assumption that the upper-middle class has lost trust in conventional schools to provide a value-based education. Parental concerns in this regard are justified, as their busy lifestyles and evolving understanding of education have fueled the demand for high-quality education. In line with Sandra's research, which shows that Muslim parents have a strong desire to enroll their children in private schools that offer Islamic values, this provides evidence that Islamic schools such as IBS serve as the primary vehicle for educating the younger generation (Syafe'i, 2017). Furthermore, IBS also emphasizes providing quality education that meets the needs and demands of the times. The shift in market interest from conventional schools to IBS is also influenced by the busy schedules of middle-class parents, which has led to concerns over value-based education and character development being entrusted to IBS. This is supported by survey data showing that nearly 80% of parents believe that the IBS curriculum meets their expectations.

This hypothesis presents broader opportunities for Islamic Boarding Schools (IBS) to explore market segments and capitalize on the autonomy granted through school privatization, allowing them to design educational models that are perceived as solutions by contemporary parents. With the autonomy afforded by privatization, IBS enjoys considerable freedom in developing educational offerings that align with the

preferences of the middle class. Naturally, parents must pay for the diverse services provided by IBS, which may include an inclusive curriculum, exceptional facilities, a variety of extracurricular activities, high-quality teachers, an attractive boarding concept, exchange programs, and international collaborations. Moreover, the autonomy of IBS in redesigning school concepts extends to aspects such as management, funding, and operational implementation. In the context of education, the influence of neoliberalism is evident in the fundamental changes to how education is regulated, funded, and delivered. This shift has led to the corporatization of schools, involving partnerships with other educational providers, such as foreign institutions and private organizations, offering programs such as exchange opportunities and the adoption of foreign curricula. Indeed, corporatization is particularly applicable to IBS, given that they operate as private institutions with autonomy and are not subject to specific government regulations.

3.2 Social Class Segmentation in Islamic Boarding Schools (IBS): An Analysis of Educational Dynamics

Although there is a perception that boarding schools are more expensive compared to general educational institutions, due to the higher quantity and quality of education they offer beyond conventional systems, recent trends show an increasing interest among the public in enrolling their children in boarding schools (Rakhtikawati, 2021). The existence of boarding schools is closely tied to the prevailing mindset of the Indonesian population, the majority of whom are Muslim (Rakhtikawati, 2021). As educational institutions that integrate community-based education while nurturing both academic achievement and character development, reputation becomes a crucial factor influencing public trust and the long-term sustainability of these schools. However, the existence of boarding schools is not without challenges, particularly as the influence of neoliberalism spreads across various sectors of society, including education. This shift has compelled boarding schools to undergo a process of reconceptualization in several areas, including the curricula they offer.

In efforts to expand their market and accommodate the growing number of applicants each year, Islamic Boarding Schools (IBS) engage in clear market segmentation. The provision of a relevant and integrated curriculum is central to addressing contemporary educational needs without

compromising the core identity of the Islamic boarding school. IBS integrates various curriculum models in religious education, such as the Tahfidz and Tahsin programs, which adhere to the standards of Madinah and Egypt—global centers of Quran memorization and recitation. Comparative studies of IBS from various regions have shown that IBS also combine religious education with subjects that promote technological development, scientific knowledge, and practical skills. This combination enables IBS graduates to compete in the modern world while maintaining their religious values. Such a holistic curriculum enhances the adaptability and relevance of IBS for parents and students seeking a robust religious education, while also preparing them for the challenges of a globalized society.

To implement effective market segmentation, IBS considers several key factors, as outlined by Camilleri: demographic, psychographic, and psychological factors (Susiyani, 2017) (1) Demographic Factors: Market orientation in this context focuses on the physical and factual location of the market. Although IBS are spread across various regions of Indonesia, significant demographic differences exist between prospective IBS students from West Sumatra and those from other regions. These differences are influenced by cultural, socio-economic, and educational preferences unique to each area. (2) Psychographic Factors: This segment focuses on market analysis based on societal values, including culture, interests, lifestyle, and personality traits. Parents who choose IBS for their children are often influenced by psychographic factors, such as personal values, lifestyle choices, and religious beliefs. Observations of IBS in West Sumatra and other regions indicate that parents in these areas prioritize raising children who are not only academically proficient but also morally upright “*akhlakul karimah*”. Furthermore, the Islamic lifestyle within the family unit is a significant motivating factor for parents to invest in IBS, even though the cost of education at these institutions may be higher. (3) Psychological Factors: Psychological factors play a critical role in parental decision-making, as many parents believe that the religiously structured and disciplined environment at boarding schools has a positive impact on their children’s mental and emotional development. In this regard, it is important to recognize that market demand is influenced by the perceived benefits for both parents and students. Observational data suggest that the challenges of an unfavorable social environment, particularly in terms of peer relationships, contribute to parental concerns, thereby increasing their desire

for educational settings that foster both academic and moral development.

In order to effectively understand and manage a diverse market, it is essential for Boarding Schools to consider the key factors that influence parental decision-making when selecting education for their children. According to the market segmentation approach proposed by Camilleri, three primary dimensions are crucial for analyzing market segmentation: demographic, psychographic, and psychological factors (Susiyani, 2017). These dimensions provide valuable insight for Boarding Schools to identify and address the needs and expectations of parents and students from various socio-cultural and economic backgrounds

3.3 Class Segmentation Based on Demographics

The demographic aspect focuses on market orientation based on the physical and factual positioning of regions. Although Islamic Boarding Schools (IBS) are spread across various regions in Indonesia, there is a noticeable concentration of IBS interest in certain areas, particularly in West Sumatra. This regional distribution is significantly influenced by demographic factors such as culture, socio-economic status, and local educational preferences. Research findings indicate that the selection of schools in West Sumatra is primarily driven by the desire to ensure religious and moral education for children, which aligns with the local cultural context.

Therefore, despite the widespread presence of IBS across Indonesia, demographic differences highlight how local context and culture influence parental decisions in selecting IBS. The study shows that the community in West Sumatra, particularly parents choosing IBS for their children, is largely influenced by local cultural and socio-economic factors. Most IBS applicants in West Sumatra come from areas with a strong cultural foundation in religious values, such as Pasaman Barat, Agam, Padang Pariaman, Pesisir Selatan, and Sijunjung. In these regions, IBS are often seen as an educational solution that prioritizes religious and moral education in line with the values upheld by the local community. This selection pattern reflects a strong attachment to local culture, where parents prefer educational institutions that not only offer formal education but also instill solid religious values in their children.

(Cohen-Zada & Elder, 2018) study highlights that in regions with dominant religious communities, parents’ preference for sending their children to Islamic Boarding Schools (IBS) is often driven by a

desire to shield them from external values that may be perceived as threatening or conflicting with local cultural and religious norms. In Indonesia, many regions, particularly in West Sumatra, West Java, and other areas, have populations with high levels of religiosity, where religion plays a key role in school selection for children. In this context, demographic factors, including religious communities, strong cultural values, and socio-economic conditions, are crucial to understanding the interest in IBS. Parents in these areas choose IBS not only for the perceived quality of education but also to ensure that their children's education aligns with the religious and moral values they uphold.

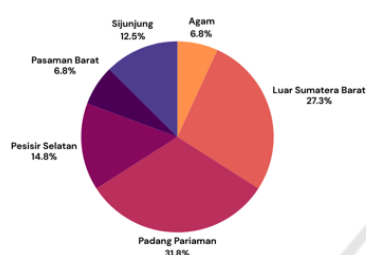


Figure 1: Demographic distribution of Islamic boarding school students in West Sumatra.



Figure 2: Parents who are involved and not involved in Islamic organizations.

3.4 Class Segmentation Based on Psychographics

From a psychographic perspective, the choice of an Islamic Boarding School (IBS) is primarily influenced by the values, lifestyle, and cultural practices inherent within the family. Both studies found that parents tend to choose IBS based on shared religious and cultural values they wish to pass on to their children. For many families, the desire to raise children who embody both Islamic morals and intellectual capabilities serves as a primary motivation. Additionally, this preference is supported by the belief that IBS can provide an environment that aligns with the Islamic principles held by the family. This finding aligns (Pabundu & Ramadhana, 2023) research, which suggests that the communication patterns of parents in IBS are characterized by a

laissez-faire approach, where parents entrust their children's educational issues to the institution, such as a IBS.

Moreover, significant differences were found in the psychographic factors influencing the selection of IBS. In West Sumatra, the choice of IBS is strongly driven by the region's Minangkabau cultural values, where religious education serves to preserve local customs and maintain cultural identity. In contrast, in other regions, the selection of IBS not only reinforces religious values but also emphasizes competitive education, preparing children to face the global market. In both regions, the Islamic lifestyle is a primary motivator; however, in West Sumatra, IBS supports traditional norms, whereas in broader areas, IBS tends to be more adaptable to urban lifestyles (Tuzzahrah et al., 2016).

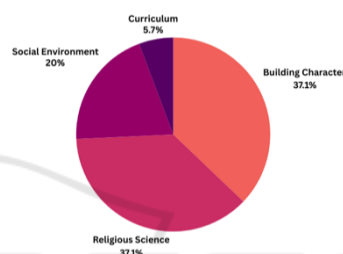


Figure 3: factors influencing the selection of Islamic Boarding Schools.

Based on the questionnaire data distributed to parents in West Sumatra, the primary factors influencing the selection of an Islamic Boarding School (IBS) are related to child development and the quality of education as an investment for the child's future. Parents in this region tend to prioritize education that aligns with Islamic social norms and ethics, as well as the Minangkabau culture, and prefer educational environments that are structured, religious, and free from the negative influences of foreign cultures. IBS is viewed as an ideal choice because it offers these qualities. These findings align with (Lahmar, 2020) research, which emphasizes the importance of developing Islamic wisdom to support the holistic growth of students. Parents in West Sumatra believe that a strong religious education provides a solid foundation for their children's lives. Thus, educational programs that are relevant to local values and religious teachings represent a potential market segment for IBS educational institutions (Murliadi et al., 2022). Furthermore, other data indicates that the key factors behind the choice of IBS are centered around the child's well-being, development, and the quality of education as an investment by parents. As a result, school programs

that are relevant to these concerns present a promising market segment for educational foundations.

3.5 Class Segmentation Based on Psychology

The findings of the study indicate that, in terms of personality traits, parents in West Sumatra are more conservative, which sets them apart from other regions where the segmentation is focused on education that fosters children's adaptability. In line with this, research by (Simpson et al., 2022) explains that the interaction between factors of privilege and social class is identified as the primary motivation for parents when selecting a boarding school for their children. Despite these differences, both regions share a common goal: to equip children with a comprehensive Islamic education. The psychological aspect highlights that the benefits to the mental and character development of children are significant considerations in the decision-making process. Research by (Faizin, 2024) has revealed that the formation of discipline in students is reflected in various activities found in IBS and schools, which aim to build children's character. This is evident through the discipline exhibited in IBS, such as punctuality in attending classes, performing prayers on time, maintaining neat attire, participating in morning and afternoon flag ceremonies, cleaning the environment, and adhering to the established rules.

Based on observations, concerns regarding the negative influences in adolescent social environments, such as drug abuse, free relationships, and juvenile delinquency, have led many parents in West Sumatra to choose IBS as the preferred educational institution for their children (Tuzzahrah et al., 2016). Parents believe that the religious and structured environment of IBS can cultivate discipline, responsibility, and independence in their children. The research data show that, psychologically, 97% of the children expressed willingness to enroll in IBS. With the specialized curriculum and programs offered at IBS, parents feel reassured and confident that their children are receiving not only academic education but also strong character development as preparation for their future. According to a survey conducted in West Sumatra, 78% of parents believe the curriculum provided by IBS meets their needs.

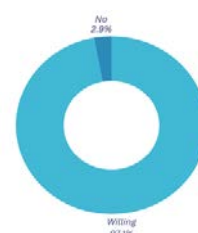


Figure 4: Psychological Readiness of Children to Enroll in IBS.

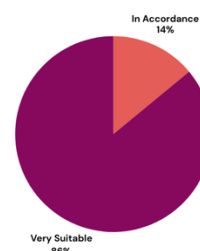


Figure 5: The Curriculum and Facilities of IBS are very Suitable according to Parents.

3.6 Comparison of Islamic Boarding Schools and Public/Private Schools in Indonesia

In Indonesia, Islamic Boarding Schools (IBS) differ significantly from public and private schools in their educational approach, curriculum, and overall objectives. Public and private schools typically focus on a standardized national curriculum emphasizing academic subjects such as mathematics, science, and language skills. In contrast, IBS integrate religious education with secular knowledge, prioritizing Islamic values and moral character development alongside academic achievements. Public schools are generally more accessible due to government subsidies, while private schools often cater to middle-to-upper-income families with more modern facilities and diverse extracurricular programs. IBS, however, offer a unique blend of affordability and holistic education, often supported by community donations and waqf systems, which allow them to cater to students from various socio-economic backgrounds. According to (Fadhilah & Samyuri, 2024) IBS play a vital role in providing affordable education while fostering religious and ethical growth, making them particularly attractive to parents seeking both spiritual and academic excellence for their children. Furthermore, while public and private schools are structured around a fixed daily schedule, IBS often operate with a boarding system, providing 24/7 supervision and fostering a close-knit community.

This immersive environment enhances character building and self-discipline, aspects that are sometimes less emphasized in public and private schools (Pelz & Den Dulk, 2018).

3.7 Parents' Perspectives on Islamic Boarding Schools (IBS)

Parents often view Islamic Boarding Schools (IBS) as institutions that provide a holistic educational environment combining academic knowledge with strong religious and moral foundations. Many parents value IBS for instilling discipline, self-control, and ethical behavior in their children, which are essential in shaping their character. Studies show that parents appreciate how IBS emphasize religious education alongside modern subjects, creating a balanced approach to personal and academic development. For example, a study by (Hasanah, 2021) highlights that parents support the memorization of the Qur'an in IBS, seeing it as an investment in their child's spiritual and intellectual growth. Additionally, parents see IBS as safe spaces for nurturing Islamic values in a structured and child-friendly environment. The emphasis on fostering good character, such as self-discipline and respect, resonates with parents' aspirations for their children's futures (Faidah et al., 2024). Furthermore, the schools' ability to create a sense of community and belonging is another critical factor that appeals to many families, especially those seeking moral and spiritual guidance for their children.

3.8 Islamic Boarding Schools: Expanding Access for the Lower-Middle Class

Islamic boarding schools play a critical role in improving educational access for the lower-middle class by implementing a multifaceted approach that includes offering affordable tuition fees often supported by community funding, government subsidies, and waqf (Islamic endowments); providing scholarships and financial aid programs targeted at students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds; integrating religious studies with general education to deliver a comprehensive curriculum that prepares students for both spiritual growth and professional opportunities (Roqib, 2021); establishing vocational training programs that equip students with practical skills such as entrepreneurship, agriculture, and craftsmanship to enhance their economic independence; maintaining

inclusive admission policies that prioritize access regardless of financial status; offering free or low-cost boarding facilities that include accommodation, meals, and daily guidance to reduce the overall cost of education; and fostering moral and ethical development through Islamic teachings to shape disciplined and community-oriented individuals who can contribute positively to society, all while leveraging strong community engagement and donor support to sustain their operations and expand their reach to underserved populations (Yusuf et al., 2024).

3.9 Income Disparity among IBS Parents

Income disparity among parents whose children attend Islamic Boarding Schools (IBS) reflects broader socio-economic divisions while highlighting the schools' significant role in bridging educational gaps. Many IBS accommodate students from varied income groups, including those from lower-income families, by offering scholarships, financial aid, and community support programs (Kusnadi et al., 2017b). These initiatives are rooted in Islamic principles of social justice and inclusivity, ensuring that education remains accessible despite financial barriers. Research shows that the cost structures of IBS often include sliding scales or community-sponsored funding to cater to families with limited resources. For instance, modern pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) often integrate vocational training, which helps students contribute economically to their communities after graduation, thereby indirectly addressing income disparities over the long term (Beti, 2023). Some institutions, like Husnul Khotimah in Indonesia, emphasize leadership and academic rigor while receiving endowments and waqf support to sustain operations and alleviate financial burdens on families.

However, challenges persist, particularly in fully equalizing opportunities for students from all income levels. Wealthier families often have the means to afford additional resources, such as tutoring or technology, which can affect overall academic outcomes. Furthermore, geographic limitations and the allocation of financial aid can exacerbate these disparities. For example, students from rural or remote areas may face additional barriers in accessing quality education or support services, despite financial aid programs. This underscores the need for a deeper examination of the specific mechanisms that perpetuate these disparities, such as how financial aid is distributed and whether geographic location impacts access to resources. Addressing these issues

will require continued innovation in funding models, equitable resource distribution, and a more nuanced understanding of the structural factors that sustain socio-economic gaps within IBS networks (Martin et al., 2014). For a detailed study on economic impacts and the role of IBS in social mobility, see works like "Economic Empowerment of Boarding Schools" and "Sustainable Islamic Boarding School Economic Models (Yusuf et al., 2024).

3.10 Addressing Income Disparities in Islamic Boarding Schools

To address income disparities in Islamic Boarding Schools (IBS), comprehensive policies are needed to promote inclusivity and equitable access for students from diverse economic backgrounds. These policies often focus on the following strategies: (1) Government Support and Funding, Increased allocation of state or regional budgets to subsidize IBS operations can reduce tuition costs for lower-income families. Programs such as "BOS Pesantren" (School Operational Assistance for Islamic Boarding Schools) in Indonesia have proven effective in ensuring that disadvantaged students can attend IBS without financial strain (Yusuf et al., 2024). (2) Waqf and Zakat Optimization, Leveraging Islamic financial instruments like waqf (endowments) and zakat (mandatory almsgiving) enables IBS to establish sustainable scholarship programs. Studies by (Fadhilah & Samyuri, 2024) highlight how these mechanisms can bridge funding gaps and create long-term resources for educational equity. (3) Scholarship Programs, Targeted scholarships for underprivileged students are critical. Research by (Beti, 2023) emphasizes that well-structured scholarship schemes, coupled with community contributions, enhance accessibility and reduce economic disparities in IBS. (4) Community-Based Initiatives, Collaborative efforts involving local communities, NGOs, and alumni associations can generate funding to support students from low-income families. This approach not only fosters solidarity but also strengthens the socio-economic impact of IBS education (Muhith et al., 2023). (5) Income-Generating Activities, Encouraging IBS to develop vocational training and entrepreneurial programs helps generate income that can be reinvested into subsidies and financial aid for students. For example, pesantren that run small businesses or agricultural projects often use the proceeds to support operational costs and reduce fees for students in need (Yusuf et al., 2024).

4 CONCLUSIONS

The evolution of Islamic Boarding Schools (IBS) in West Sumatra, Indonesia, highlighting their transformation under the influence of neoliberal trends. Historically, IBS focused on religious education, character building, and Quran memorization. However, they have adapted to contemporary demands by integrating broader competencies such as technological literacy, foreign language proficiency, and industry-relevant skills, preparing students for challenges in a globalized world. Neoliberalism has significantly influenced IBS, leading to their privatization and adoption of market-driven strategies. This shift has granted them greater autonomy but has also resulted in the commodification of education. As a consequence, access to IBS is increasingly stratified, favoring middle-to-upper-class families due to rising tuition fees. The segmentation of IBS based on social class is evident through various factors. Demographically, cultural, regional, and socio-economic contexts shape parental choices. Psychographically, parents are drawn to IBS that align with their religious and cultural values, emphasizing the preservation of Islamic principles within their families. Psychologically, many parents choose IBS to shield their children from negative societal influences and to provide a structured, moral-focused environment.

Despite being perceived as costlier than public schools, IBS remain attractive to families due to their holistic educational approach, blending religious and secular studies. To address disparities and support lower-income families, IBS implement measures such as scholarships, community funding, and waqf-based programs. These initiatives demonstrate their commitment to inclusivity and social equity.

In conclusion, IBS in West Sumatra exemplify the intersection of education, market forces, and societal values in a neoliberal context. They continue to uphold traditional Islamic principles while adapting to modern educational requirements, effectively catering to diverse socio-economic groups and fostering character development alongside academic achievement.

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